

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Bob Stump, Chairman

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Stump, Skelton Release Report on Congressional Investigation into Terrorist Attack on the *U.S.S. Cole*

*Report finds numerous contributing causes of vulnerability, recommends reforms to
prevent future terrorist attacks*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The October 2000 terrorist attack on the *U.S.S. Cole* exploited a number of vulnerabilities and oversights that must immediately be corrected by the military services, Defense Department, State Department, and intelligence community, concludes a report released today by House Armed Services Committee chairman Bob Stump (R-AZ) and Ranking Member Ike Skelton (D-MO).

“After more than three months of intensive investigation, this report concludes that the *U.S.S. Cole* tragedy was not the fault of any one decision, policy, or practice. Rather, many mistakes, oversights, errors in judgment, and missteps – each of which may have been insignificant on an individual basis – combined to leave the *U.S.S. Cole* and its crew vulnerable to a terrorist attack,” said Stump.

“It is a far-reaching report that will have lasting effects on force protection activities not only for U.S. Navy forces, but for all U.S. forces and installations,” said Skelton.

The bipartisan report, compiled by House Armed Services Committee staff, reviews the findings of the official Department of Defense *U.S.S. Cole* Commission investigation (headed by retired Admiral Harold Gehman and retired General William Crouch) and the Department of the Navy Judge Advocate General Manual (JAGMAN) investigation. In addition, the report released today addresses several issues left unexamined by the previous reports, and focuses attention on implementation of the U.S. policy of engagement, along with operational and organizational issues that contributed to the presence of the *U.S.S. Cole* in Yemen in October 2000.

The report’s key findings include:

- The U.S. policy of engagement with Yemen – a country described in a 1999 State Department report as a “safehaven for terrorists” – led to an increase in refueling stops in the port of Aden;

— *continued* —

- The desire to increase U.S. engagement with Yemen outpaced an understanding of the terrorist threat there, increasing the risk to the ship;
- Operational requirements and cuts to U.S. Navy force structure necessitated the transit of the *U.S.S. Cole* from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, and its en-route refueling in Yemen;
- The Navy's force protection training does not focus adequately on waterborne terrorist threats; and
- In the case of the *U.S.S. Cole*, intelligence shortfalls led to a failure of the intelligence community to provide tactical warning of the attack.

In addition, the report contains 30 recommendations for improving and enhancing the United States' ability to prevent terrorist attacks.

The report released today brings greater scrutiny upon DOD's anti-terrorism and force protection efforts. Furthermore, this report provides vital context for understanding why the *U.S.S. Cole* was in Yemen, enhancing the perspective with which U.S. officials assess efforts to engage other nations around the world.

"Perhaps most importantly, this report will play an important role in Congress' consideration of legislative initiatives and the U.S. military's efforts to prevent future terrorist attacks on U.S. personnel and interests," concluded Stump.

The report is available on the committee website at <http://www.house.gov/hasc/reports/reports.html>.

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